

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
REFORMER 403

exceptional. Our great men have to be taken with their faults as with their virtues. Englishmen will remember that Nelson, Wellington, and Lord Melbourne violated the popular standard of morality, and yet rendered great services to their country. Americans will remember the same of Franklin, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay. A recent President of the United States was not above reproach when he was elected to the supreme magistracy. There is an English statesman of commanding abilities, on one page of whose career a blot appears and who for that reason has been pursued with unrelenting hatred by canting Pharisees — those to whom one owes the monstrous and inhuman doctrine that an error in a man's life must never be forgiven, that if he stumble but once he must always remain damned* With their narrow bigotry those people arrogate to themselves a greater righteousness than that of the Christ whose precepts they pretend to follow. To love one another, to forget and to forgive, are no maxims of theirs. Though the name of the Deity is so constantly on their lips, they really seem to be men after the devil's own heart, for they play the part of his imps, ever intent on persecution.

If the world were to reject all the great men who have erred, would not the pantheons of the nations be well-nigh empty? If it were to reject the works of every writer

whose life was not absolutely immaculate, what literature would be left ? Masterpieces of the human mind, writings that have wrought an infinity of good, would he cast aside. One may remind the reader that a good many English authors even of that age of specious respectability, the Victorian era, were by no means perfect in their private lives. In France, no doubt, more laxity has prevailed. Take that